

West Dean 3D217: Picture Framing -Paul Confavreux 21st to 24th May 1999

Glossary
Moulding
Mount = Passepartout = Matt (US)
Rebate = rabbet (US) = indent in back of frame

1. Arty bit

1.1. Which frame?

Watercolour gilt is good, adding light
eg botanical illustrations: very thin baguette of gold is a clean look)
Oil thick, for strength (see Ken Howard pictures), gilt
Cool effect silver/blue
Etchings blue rather than warm, NOT green (makes the black look mouldy).

1.2. Which mount?

In double mounts, Paul prefers darker outside (unconventional): opens up the picture.
Grey tends to flatten colours (although is chameleon so good at matching the colour).
Terrible with watercolour.
Colours tend to pick out the same colour in the picture: go for the foreground colour.
Consider complementary colours (blue/orange, violet/yellow; red/green)
Hold pastel alternatives against each other to compare choices. Pinkish is good at bringing out greens and reds; yellow for blues and violets, ivory (slightly green) very good for double mounts and botanical because cool and crisp.
Care not to outweigh the picture (eg a bright colourful Chagal needs a very simple mount, papyrus needs yellow and definitely not black.)
B&W photos: restricted choice, but note the different shades of black in photo.
Brown will warm the picture. Do not use gaudy frame.

2. Frame size

Recommended for portrait picture orientation:

Total width $W = w$ (picture width) + $a + a$

Total height $L = h$ (picture height) + $a + a'$, where $a' = 1.1 \times a$

Add on anything special extra, eg rebate size if desired.

This works particularly well where the viewer will be looking up to the picture (as historically) rather than straight on.

For landscape, the same but $a' = a$

A good size for a is 2 inches = 50 mm, whatever the picture size. If a wash is being added, consider this as part of w, but add an extra ½", 12 mm outside this. As mount size increases, picture size apparently decreases (so large mount => picture recede).

For two pictures in one mount, the bar between pictures should be 2/3a (NOT 2a).

If a title is to be added, add a", depending on how long/big the title is. Ensure that this is spaced (within a") at least ¼" 6 mm away from picture bottom. If it has to be closer, make it part of the main window using an appropriate cut-out.

3. Cutting mouldings

Good mitre blocks, with attached saw etc cost about £26 - cheap enough to throw away whole and replace as necessary. Saw should be about 24 teeth per inch.

Clamp moulding in, face upwards, rebate towards user. Cut longest length first (so if an error, can cut it down for the shorter side). Clamp very firmly and tight to the block. Saw first angle, release. Mark L along the rebate with a pencil line, line up line in saw slit, **set stop** to memorise length of piece, and saw. Then do second side of same length, using stop to match measure.

Trimmer can be used to get exact match. Care: it is easy to let it "twist" so faces are not flat or at correct angle.

Clamp together using yellow clamps in string to check for fit. If OK, pull out one piece at a time and glue (do not leave large amounts of glue in corners since this can stop glass sitting snugly and cause it to crack). Re-clamp and tighten, leave ½ hr, unclamp to clean off soft glue with damp cloth, then re-clamp for another ½ hr.

4. Which glass?

Deadens colour and texture. Avoid for embroideries but essential to protect mounts.

Do not get less than 2mm thickness - too fragile so dangerous. 2mm good with hardboard of any size.

Non-reflective knocks colour back even more, so is OK only if vibrant picture. Very good to "smooth" creased glossy photos.

Plastic is good but expensive and easily scratched when cleaned.

Glass cutter with oil in handle costs £20. Press down pre starting, to start oilflow.

Must use mount for pastels and possibly old photos, to avoid them touching the glass.

5. Cutting mount

Cutter costs about £30.

Keep the mount edge well away from unreliable edges (eg wonky lines) in the picture.

Use gauge to mark parallel guidelines on reverse of mount.

Make sure mount cutter edge is "clean", especially the point. Put 2nd piece of scrap mount below to receive point of cutter, of enough size to keep cutter "flat". Adjust depth of cutter blade by unscrewing and moving.

Piece being kept is held under the straight edge. Put pressure on this while cutting.

5.1. Double mounts

Total size should still be "a".

Do the biggest window first in the usual way (the one nearest the glass).

Tape the cut-out back in, using masking tape on two opposite sides and double-sided tape on the remaining two sides.

Drop inner mount card on, of any size. mark next inner mount as before (note, no extra backing mount is needed inside cutter holder).

Should be possible to push both centres out together: pull masking tape out carefully (but obviously not double sided).

5.2. V groove

Cut out window normally. Tape cut-out back in. Cut on same line but "wrong way round". Tape cut-out back in. [??]

6. Nailing corners

Nailing stops the picture "twisting" as central heating dries out the frame.

(?Always?) use 3/4" nails.

Put a nail of the same size into drill bit, having nipped off head to make a firm hold.

Drill into top and bottom (theoretically the hidden edge), halfway in from front and halfway along rebate. If a glossy frame, put a protector on the end of the drill bit (a piece of pencil-end-rubber or cardboard, and complete last stage of hammering using a punch under the hammer as a driver.

If moulding is dark, paint over nail head with dark felt tip.

7. D ring

Select position using Paul's chart (Up and In).

Punch hole by hammering a masonry nail through the hardboard held over the table edge, and wiggle the nail to increase the size.

Clean edge with pen knife.

D ring has 2 sides. Feed central "nail" through same side as (correct face of) D ring.

Drive screwdriver between arms to split apart. Put head on table edge, and hammer arm off-edge until it is flat as possible to the hardboard.

Cover with masking tape (not ideal but no alternative).

8. Backing

SBS (smooth both sides) hardboard good. If one side rough, put it away from contents. 2½mm+.

Contains acid, so line picture back with acid free cartridge first.

(Stick paper to mount with 1 piece of masking tape to form hinge at the top. Picture is then moved inside until correctly placed, then tape in place on each vertical side.

Saw slanted grooves into the hardboard, about 1½" apart, and near corners.

Drive 3/8" nails into frame along grooves using screwdriver to push them in.

Cover back edge with brown tape: Wet well, without damaging picture! Will dry tight and create airtight seal. Note if not tight, can re-wet on back.

9. Mount decoration

9.1. Lines:

Leave ¼" from bevel for first line, should be equidistant from bevel all round.

Leave wider and wider gaps, to open out picture to viewer.

Use "corner gadget", marking corners with soft pencil, with post-its beyond line edge. Do lines in one go.

Do parallel sides, allow to dry and do attaching sides. Do inside lines first.

Any paint so long as not oil based (damages mount). Draftsman's pen good for gritty pinks (eg gold Windsor and Newton - do not dilute this any further): do not overfill (blobs).

A double mount operates as a line.

9.2. Washes

Use chisel shaped brushes. For guide, use set square with bevel edge downwards, and supported up off the paper.

Start at the middle of a straight. feather corners, and pull any blobs around the wash. Re-wet the starting point and feather in.

Stay light with the paint. Ideally re-do second layer in opposite direction, starting at a different point.

For watercolours, wash should use a colour in the picture not yet highlighted.

10. Framing fabric

Moulding should be hockey stick in profile if possible.

The hardboard should be the size of the fabric or more. Lace up and down and L to R, then pull tight and even out tension. OR stick gripper strips on the hardboard using double sided tape. Put acid free paper between material and hardboard.

Silks can be stretched using masking tape (perishes but unavoidable). Might need to restretch the next day; and in time.

Avoid putting on glass (though must if mounted).

Key: keep everything dry to avoid damage at weakened damp spot. (If hung in a bathroom put glass on back and front and seal with tape round the edges.

11. Box Frames

Make frame: depth does not matter. Make box from thin wood (4mm), of depth required. Use trimmer to cut box accurately to size.

Cut glass to fit frame, place in frame. Put box inside frame (to hold glass in). Use drill to start holes to fit box to frame. Use mole grips ("plumber's wrench") to carefully squeeze nails in.

Cut hardboard to fit outer dimensions of box.

Line inside of box with mount card using double sided tape. Cut mounting card to fit inner dimension of box (plus lining).

Glue or use fuse wire contents to backing. Put D rings on backing. Glue backing to mount card to hardboard.

Nail hardboard etc to box (using drill etc.)

12. Framing Oil Paintings

Old fashioned painters (stretchers) were often cut square so that their inner edges show through the painting. Modern painters come with special shapes (rounded inner edges). These come in standard sizes: choose the size for the final picture size.

Canvases should always be rolled up picture side OUT (so any cracks created will close when the picture is flattened again).

Wedges are the last tensioner (different approaches about the directions used, but always in one direction, and remember which direction the tightening is happening.)

Canvas can be tensioned on using galvanised nails, or much more easily staple. Use canvas pliers to pull canvas taut. staple the centre of each side first (opposite sides together) then corners. Protect the canvas from the hammer by putting mount card over it.

If a new picture, will need to tension overnight and then reset tension.

Frame: add 3mm to the stretcher size for play. Z clips hold picture into frame.

D rings should be into frame not stretcher.

Can put in a slip (thin wood usually gilded) to space glass away from painting.

13. Bodging

Newsprint: ones that do not smudge are Daily Mail and Evening Standard

Stains: use a Lyons Dry Cleaning pad (a sock with rubber in it), and a scalpel to remove small dots. Bear in mind that the surface will as a result be different which will show if a wash is put on.

Mount cut rough: use scalpel to correct corners (cutting into the corner) and emery board on the edge. repair holes by pushing in chalk dust.

Frame: Disguise chipped surfaces with felt tip or shoe polish. "Goldfinger" for repairing gilt (gold or silver) mixed in with white spirit - choose right shade of gold.

One of Paul's handouts from the course.

ITEM		IN		DOWN	
mm	inches	mm	inches	mm	inches
0 - 150	0 - 6	32	1 1/4"	45	1 3/4"
150 - 300	6 - 12	40	1 1/2"	70	2 3/4"
300 - 400	12 - 15	45	1 3/4"	90	3 1/2"
400 - 500	15 - 20	55	2 1/4"	120	4 1/2"
500 - 600	20 - 25	70	2 3/4"	150	6"
600 - 800	25 - 30	100	4"	200	7 1/2"
1000		110	5"	240	9"